

Biden pushed to speak out more as U.S. democracy concerns grow

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has gotten the same troubling questions from worried world leaders, ones that he never thought he would hear. "Is America going to be all right?" they ask. "What about democracy in America?"

While Biden has tried to offer America's allies assurances, he has only occasionally emphasized the gravity of the threat to democracy from the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and the repeated lie from the man he defeated, Donald Trump, that the 2020 election was stolen. And he's not discussed the very real concerns about a growing collection of insurrection sympathizers installed in local election

posts and changes by Republicans to election laws in several states.

Now, as the anniversary of that deadly day nears, the Democratic president is being urged to reorder priorities and use the powers of his office to push voting rights legislation that its adherents say could be the only effective way to counter the rapidly emerging threats to the democratic process.

The tension in Biden's approach reflects his balancing of the urgent needs of Americans to make progress on the highly visible issues of the coronavirus pandemic and the economy and the less visible, but equally vital, issue of preserving trust in elections and government.

Continued on next page



President Joe Biden delivers a speech on voting rights at the National Constitution Center, on July 13, 2021, in Philadelphia.

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Continued from Front

The president plans to deliver a speech on Jan. 6 focused on sustaining democracy — voting rights won't be part of the remarks but will be the topic of another speech soon, White House aides said.

In his recent commencement address at South Carolina State University, Biden's tone on the need for voting rights legislation took on added urgency.

"I've never seen anything like the unrelenting assault on the right to vote. Never," Biden said, adding, "This new sinister combination of voter suppression and election subversion, it's un-American, it's undemocratic, and sadly, it is unprecedented since Reconstruction."

And the world is taking notice. Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, also has said that the riot at the Capitol has altered the view many countries have of the United States.

"Jan. 6 has had a material impact on the view of the United States from the rest of the world, I believe from allies and adversaries alike," Sullivan said recently at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Allies look at it with concern and worry about the future of American democracy."

Adversaries look at it, you know, more sort of rubbing their hands together and thinking, How do we take advantage of this in one way or another?"

In contrast, Republicans in numerous states are promoting efforts to influence future elections by installing sympathetic leaders in local election posts and backing for elective office some of those who participated in the insurrection.

White House officials insist Biden's relative reticence should not be interpreted as complacency with the growing movement to re-



President Joe Biden delivers a speech on voting rights at the National Constitution Center, on July 13, 2021, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

write history surrounding the Jan. 6 riot. Rather, they say, the president believes the most effective way to combat Trump, election denialism and domestic extremism is to prove to the rest of the country — and to the world — that government can work.

"I know progress does not come fast enough. It never has," Biden said last fall. "The process of governing is frustrating and sometimes dispiriting. But I also know what's possible if we keep the pressure up, if we never give up, we keep the faith."

In Biden's view, many of Trump's voters didn't wholly embrace Trumpism. Instead, Trump exploited long-standing dissatisfaction with the nation's political, economic and social systems to build his coalition.

So Biden tailored his first-year domestic agenda to combating what he believed to be the root causes of the unease — the shaky economy and the pandemic's drag on it — essentially to prove that government can work effectively.

He has directed federal law enforcement to shore up security at national institutions and improve communication systems and procedures that were in part to blame for U.S. Capitol Police being left overwhelmed for hours during the mob assault.

The Justice Department has undertaken the largest prosecution in its history, charging more than 700 defendants and still looking for more.

But it is voting rights that many Democrats and activists concerned about what may happen in 2022 and beyond are urging the president to make a key priority.

"The insurrection was part of a larger movement to suppress elections and overthrow our democracy," said Christina Baal-Owens, a longtime organizer and the executive director of Public Wise, a group that researches and publishes information on candidates running for office who support the election lies.

Baal-Owens said efforts to discredit election integrity

not only galvanize Trump supporters, they also make other voters less likely to vote. "We know — we've done some research on trust in the system — if voters don't trust elections, they may not vote. This is part of a larger movement of voter suppression and why it's so necessary for Biden to speak out."

The House has approved far-reaching voting rights legislation, but Democratic Sens. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin of West Virginia have been impediments, saying they oppose changing Senate rules to get around a GOP filibuster of the bill.

That legislation would restore the Justice Department's ability to review changes to election laws in states with a history of discrimination, a provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013. According to the Brennan Center, 19 states have recently passed laws making it harder to vote.

Manchin and Sinema have helped draft separate vot-

ing rights legislation, but it lacks enough Republican support to overcome the filibuster.

"People are taking sides as opposed to looking at what the institutional threats are to maintaining our democracy," said Democratic Rep. Peter Welch of Vermont, a candidate to replace Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy, who announced his retirement.

Welch was at the Capitol on Jan. 6, and the violence that day is etched in his memory.

"The norms that have been the bedrock of our democracy, the free and peaceful transition of power and the renunciation of violence, they've been shattered," he said.

After Biden's speech in South Carolina, Senate Democrats renewed their push to pass voting rights legislation early in 2022. And the president said in an interview with ABC that he supported creating an exception to the Senate filibuster if that's what it takes to pass voting rights legislation.

For Biden, who served four decades in the Senate, it was a remarkable concession and underscored the gravity of the threat. And, he acknowledged, he knows the world is watching to see how the nation responds — and wondering if the country's democracy will survive.

"Did you ever think you'd be asked that question by another leader?" Biden said. □

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Trump, Ivanka, Don Jr. subpoenaed by NY attorney general

By MICHAEL R. SISAK

NEW YORK (AP) — New York's attorney general recently subpoenaed former President Donald Trump and his two eldest children, Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr., demanding their testimony in connection with a civil investigation into the family's business practices, according to a court filing made public Monday. The subpoenas, stemming from Attorney General Letitia James' yearslong investigation into matters including "the valuation of properties owned or controlled" by Trump and his company, the Trump Organization, came to light after James went to court last month seeking to force the Trumps to comply.

The attorney general's attempt to get testimony from the former president was reported in December, but the court filing Monday was the first public disclosure that investigators were also seeking information from Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr.

James, a Democrat, has spent more than two years looking at whether the Trump Organization misled banks or tax officials about the value of assets — inflat-



Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr., listen as President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at Kenosha Regional Airport, Monday, Nov. 2, 2020, in Kenosha, Wis.

Associated Press

ing them to gain favorable loan terms or minimizing them to reap tax savings. The Trumps have indicated they will fight the subpoenas and are expected to file court papers through their lawyers seeking to have them thrown out. A similar legal fight played out last year after James' office subpoenaed the testimony of another Trump son, Eric Trump.

Messages seeking comment were left Monday with lawyers for the Trumps and with the attorney general's office.

It was reported last month that James had requested that Donald Trump sit for a deposition, but Monday's court filing was the first public acknowledgement by her office that it had subpoenaed him.

A state court judge who

handled past disputes arising from the probe agreed Monday to entertain arguments over the subpoenas, which also seek documents from the Trumps in addition to their testimony.

As the legal fight over the subpoenas was heating up behind the scenes, Trump sued James in federal court last month, seeking to put an end to her investigation. Trump, in the lawsuit,

claimed that James had violated his constitutional rights in a "thinly-veiled effort to publicly malign Trump and his associates."

In the past, the Republican ex-president has decried James' investigation as part of a "witch hunt" along with a parallel criminal probe being run by the Manhattan district attorney's office. James' investigators last year interviewed Eric Trump, a Trump Organization executive, as part of the probe. James' office went to court to enforce a subpoena on the younger Trump and a judge forced him to testify after his lawyers abruptly canceled a previously scheduled deposition.

Although the civil investigation is separate from the district attorney's criminal investigation, James' office has been involved in both. Last year, then-District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. gained access to the long-time real estate mogul's tax records after a multi-year fight that twice went to the U.S. Supreme Court. He also brought tax fraud charges in July against the Trump Organization and its longtime CFO Allen Weisselberg. □

Schumer: Senate to vote on filibuster change on voting bill

AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Days before the anniversary of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced the Senate will vote on filibuster rules changes to advance stalled voting legislation that Democrats say is needed to protect democracy.

In a letter Monday to colleagues, Schumer, D-N.Y., said the Senate "must evolve" and will "debate and consider" the rules changes by Jan. 17, on or before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, as the Democrats seek to overcome Republican opposition to their elections law package.

"Let me be clear: January 6th was a symptom of a

broader illness — an effort to delegitimize our election process," Schumer wrote, "and the Senate must advance systemic democracy reforms to repair our republic or else the events of that day will not be an aberration — they will be the new norm."

The election and voting rights package has been stalled in the evenly-split 50-50 Senate, blocked by a Republican-led filibuster and leaving Democrats unable to mount the 60-vote threshold needed to advance it toward passage.

Democrats have been unable to agree among themselves over potential changes to the Senate rules to reduce the 60-vote hurdle, despite months of private negotiations.

Two holdout Democrats,

Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, have tried to warn their party off changes to the Senate rules, arguing that if and when Republicans take majority control of the chamber, they could use the lower voting threshold to advance bills Democrats oppose.

President Joe Biden has waded cautiously into the debate — a former senator who largely stands by existing rules but is also under enormous political pressure to break the logjam on the voting legislation.

How the Senate rules would be changed remains under discussion.

Voting rights advocates warn that Republican-led states are passing election legislation and trying to install elections officials loyal



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of N.Y., second from right, lights the menorah in the East Room of the White House in Washington, during an event to celebrate Hanukkah, Dec. 1, 2021.

Associated Press

to the former president, Donald Trump, in ways that could subvert future elections.

Trump urged his followers last Jan. 6 to "fight like hell" for his presidency, and a

mob stormed the Capitol trying to stop Congress from certifying the state election tallies for Biden. It was the worst domestic attack on the seat of government in U.S. history. □

Thousands of flights canceled, delayed at start of workweek

A winter storm hitting the mid-Atlantic combined with the pandemic to further frustrate air travelers whose return flights home from the holidays were canceled or delayed in the first few days of the new year.

More than 2,600 U.S. flights and more than 4,100 worldwide were grounded as of midday Monday, according to tracking service FlightAware. Another 8,500 flights were delayed, including 3,100 in the U.S.

Travelers could take hope from an improving weather forecast. Airlines canceled fewer than 300 U.S. flights scheduled for Tuesday.

First, however, they had to contend with a winter storm was expected to bring as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of snow for the District of Columbia, northern Virginia and central Maryland through Monday afternoon.

The cancellations and delays just added to the despair felt over the weekend by holidays travelers trying to get home.

"It was absolute mayhem," said Natasha Enos, who spent a sleepless Saturday night and Sunday morning at Denver International Airport during what was supposed to be a short layover on a cross-country trip from Washington to San Francisco.

Enos, who was booked on Frontier Airlines, didn't learn that her connecting flight home to California was canceled until she had already landed in Denver.



Travelers sit at a gate at Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, Nov. 20, 2018, in Linthicum, Md.

Associated Press

She rushed to find alternative flights and navigate through a baggage-claim area that was choked with other stranded and confused travelers at the height of new wave of COVID-19 infections.

"It was a lot of people in a very small space and not everybody was masking," said the 28-year-old financial analyst. "There were a lot of exhausted kids and some families were so stressed out."

With the spread of the highly transmissible omicron variant, the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases of COVID-19

in the U.S. has tripled over the past two weeks and topped 400,000 on Sunday, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. The toll of grounded flights in the U.S. was in the few hundreds per day the week before Christmas, then soared past 1,000 a day, as airlines blamed crew shortages caused by the virus. For several days, airlines and their passengers lucked out with mostly favorable weather, but a winter storm that hit the Midwest on Saturday caused cancellations to spike again to new highs.

Over the weekend, about

5,400 U.S. flights were canceled — nearly 12% of all scheduled flights — and more than 9,000 worldwide, according to FlightAware. Many of the cancellations were made hours or even a day in advance. Airline believe they have a better chance to keep lighter schedules on track when there are disruptions such as snow or thunderstorms. Southwest Airlines had canceled about 575 flights, or 15% of Monday's schedule, by midday. Spokesman Brad Hawkins said storms over the weekend and on Monday affected operations at some of its biggest

airports, including Chicago, Denver and Baltimore, and left planes and crews out of position.

Delta Air Lines issued a travel waiver to let customers reschedule flights to and from Baltimore and Washington.

SkyWest, a regional carrier that operates flights under the names American Eagle, Delta Connection and United Express, grounded more than 300 flights Monday after scrubbing 500 on Sunday.

In Michigan, the authority that runs Detroit International Airport said crews were working around the clock to remove snow and maintain the airfield. Atlanta's airport authority advised travelers to arrive earlier than usual because of high passenger volume, potential weather issues and pandemic-fueled staffing shortages that could lengthen the time it takes to get through security gates.

Thousands of miles from the snow storms, Hawaiian Airlines said it had to cancel several flights between islands and across the Pacific due to staffing shortages. Airlines are paying temporary bonuses to encourage pilots and flight attendants to pick up flights left empty by co-workers with COVID-19. United will pay pilots triple their usual wages for picking up open flights through most of January. Spirit Airlines reached a deal with the union to pay flight attendants double through Tuesday. □

Report paints grim picture of Chicago-area gun deaths

CHICAGO (AP) — More people were shot to death in Chicago and surrounding Cook County in 2021 than in any other year on record, officials announced Monday, two days after authorities announced that the nation's third-largest city recorded its most homicides in a quarter-century.

There were 1,002 gun-related homicides last year in Cook County, which

includes Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, the county medical examiner's office said in a news release. That was 121 more than the previous record set in 2020 and nearly twice as many as in 2019. The announcement came two days after police in Chicago, where the vast majority of the county's homicides occurred, reported that there were more homicides in the

city, 797, than in any year since 1996. As in Chicago, where the vast majority of homicides involved guns, all but 85 of the 1,087 Cook County homicides were gun-related.

In both Chicago and the county overall, the vast majority of last year's homicides happened in neighborhoods made up mostly of racial minorities. In Cook County, Black people were the victims of 80% of

the homicides and Hispanic people were the victims in 14% of them.

The pandemic helped make 2021 the second-busiest year ever for the medical examiner's office, with nearly 4,500 COVID-19 deaths contributing to the 12,618 cases it handled. Only 2020, when vaccines only rolled out in the final weeks of the pandemic's first year, was busier, with the office handling more

than 16,000 cases.

Opioids caused at least 1,488 deaths in Cook County last year, though the medical examiner's office said it expects that such drugs also were responsible for an additional 600-700 of its pending cases. If so, that would put the final 2021 opioid death figure at more than 2,000, which would surpass the 1,840 registered in 2020, the office said. □

Hong Kong news site to shut; pro-Beijing lawmakers sworn in

By HUIZHONG WU and ZEN SOO

HONG KONG (AP) — A group of lawmakers loyal to China's Communist Party were sworn in to Hong Kong's Legislature on Monday following an election without opposition candidates, as yet another pro-democracy news outlet announced it could no longer operate amid a growing crackdown on freedoms in the territory.

The former British colony that was returned to China in 1997 was once known as a haven for dissent and freedoms of the press and expression not seen on the mainland. But the central government in Beijing has clamped down in the last year, leading to the closure of independent news outlets, the removal of monuments to dissent, and a poorly attended election swept by pro-Beijing politicians.

The founders of news outlet Citizen News said the news site will stop publishing on Tuesday. While they have received no order to close, they said Monday that deteriorating media freedoms in the financial hub put them in an impossible position.

"We all love this place,



Newly elected lawmakers pose for a photograph after their oath-taking ceremony of the legislative council in Hong Kong, Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

Associated Press

deeply. Regrettably, what was ahead of us is not just pouring rains or blowing winds, but hurricanes and tsunamis," Citizen News said in a statement on Sunday, when it announced the closure.

The outlet is the third to close in recent months, following the shuttering of the territory's last pro-democracy print newspaper, Apple Daily, and the online site Stand News.

Citizen News was founded in 2017 by a group of veteran journalists. The small site focused on political news and analysis pieces, as well as investigations — and in recent months became a refuge for many journalists who had lost their jobs when other outlets closed or faced other pressures.

"With Apple Daily's sudden closure in the past summer, the journalism majors who were originally supposed

to intern with them, Citizen News made arrangements to take them in, so that students wouldn't lose this internship opportunity," said Vivian W.W. Tam, a senior lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's journalism school, in a public Facebook post. Tam declined to be interviewed. But a new sweeping National Security Law — imposed on Hong Kong by China's central Legislature

— has made independent reporting increasingly dangerous. Journalists and political activists have been arrested under the law, and it has forced civil rights groups and unions to disband. Many more activists have fled.

Meanwhile, new laws have changed how Hong Kongers vote for their representatives, including a requirement that any who seek office must be "patriots," effectively bringing the body under Beijing's control.

"What we understood about press freedom has changed a lot," said Chris Yeung, founder and chief writer at Citizen News.

Yeung said at a news conference on Monday that the trigger for their decision to shut down was what happened to Stand News. Last week, authorities raided Stand News and arrested seven people — including editors and former board members — for allegedly conspiring to publish seditious material. Stand News announced on the same day that it would cease to operate.

Two of Stand News' former editors who were arrested were later formally charged with sedition. □

Serbia praises another arms shipment from Russia

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC
Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbia's president on Monday praised another shipment of arms from Russia despite fears in the Balkans that the country's recent military buildup could lead to more tensions in the war-scarred European region.

President Aleksandar Vucic attended a training exercise at a military base near Belgrade that included recently purchased anti-tank Kornet guided missiles.

"I am pleased that our soldiers are happy about the purchase of Kornets from Russia," Vucic said. "It is one of probably the best anti-tank weapons in the world."

"The Kornet is an important defensive tool to deter anyone from potential aggres-

sion against our country," Vucic said.

Serbia has frequently been accused of saber-rattling and working with Slavic ally Russia to destabilize neighboring Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo, a former Serbian province which declared independence in 2008.

Serbia is widely blamed for triggering a bloody breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s with its nationalist policies. The country lately has armed itself mostly with Russian and Chinese warplanes, drones and anti-aircraft systems.

In recent months, Russia has handed over to Serbia 30 battle tanks and 30 armored personnel carriers. Serbia has also recently purchased sophisticated

Russian Pantsir air defense systems, as well as attack and transport helicopters and Chinese drones.

Although formally seeking European Union membership, Serbia has refused to align its foreign policies with the 27-nation bloc and has instead strengthened its alliance with Russia and China.

Vucic said on Monday that Serbia "remains on the European path," but also added that it will continue to "nourish" its friendly ties with Russia and China.

To join the EU, Serbia needs the support of all EU member nations, but the government has maintained frosty relations with fellow Balkan country Croatia, the last new member admitted into the bloc.



Serbian Army soldiers prepare for the military exercise at the army barracks in Pancevo, some 16 kilometers (10 miles) north of Belgrade, Serbia, Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

Associated Press

Croatia, which is also a member of NATO, is in a mini arms race with Serbia, which has recently received six used MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia and four more of the type from Belarus. In November, the Croatian government announced the purchase of 12 Rafale fighter jets from France. □

Sudan's PM announces resignation amid political deadlock

By SAMY MAGDY

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok announced his resignation Sunday amid political deadlock and widespread pro-democracy protests following a military coup that derailed the country's fragile transition to democratic rule.

Hamdok, a former U.N. official seen as the civilian face of Sudan's transitional government, had been reinstated as prime minister in November as part of an agreement with the military following the October coup. In that time he had failed to name a Cabinet and his resignation throws Sudan into political uncertainty amid uphill security and economic challenges.

In a televised national address Sunday, Hamdok called for a dialogue to agree on a "national charter" and to "draw a roadmap" to complete the transition to democracy in accordance with the 2019 constitutional document governing the transitional period.

"I decided to return the responsibility and declare my resignation as prime minister," he said, adding that his stepping down would allow a chance for another person to lead the nation and complete its transition



Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok speaks during a session of the summit to support Sudan, at the Grand Palais Ephémère in Paris on May 17, 2021.

Associated Press

to a "civilian, democratic country." He did not name a successor.

The prime minister said his efforts to bridge the widening gap and settle disputes among the political forces have failed.

He warned that the ongoing political stalemate since the military takeover could become a full-blown crisis and damage the country's already battered economy.

"I tried as much as I possibly could to prevent our country from sliding into a disaster. Now, our nation is

going through a dangerous turning point that could threaten its survival unless it is urgently rectified," he said.

The October coup had upended Sudan's plans to move to democracy after a popular uprising forced the military's overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019. Four months after al-Bashir's ouster, the generals and the protesters reached a power-sharing deal to rule the country through elections in 2023. However, mili-

tary-civilian ties have been frayed by the military takeover that has threatened to return Sudan to international isolation.

Hamdok's resignation comes amid a heavy security crackdown on protesters denouncing not only the takeover but the subsequent deal that reinstated him and sidelined the pro-democracy movement. He was returned to office in November amid international pressure in a deal that calls for an independent technocratic Cabinet under military oversight led

by him.

"I have had the honor of serving my country people for more than two years. And during his period I have sometimes done well, and I have sometimes failed," Hamdok said.

The Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, an umbrella group of Sudanese political parties and pro-democracy organizations, has rejected the November deal and remains committed to ending military rule. The alliance accused Hamdok of allowing the military to dominate the government, and continued to organize anti-coup street protests which were met with heavy crackdown.

Over the past two weeks, there was increasing speculation that he would step down. National and international efforts have failed to convince him to stay in office.

The U.S. State Department urged on Twitter Sudan's leaders to "set aside differences, find consensus, and ensure continued civilian rule" following Hamdok's resignation.

It also called for the appointment of the next premier and Cabinet to "in line with the (2019) constitutional declaration to meet the people's goals of freedom, peace, and justice." □

Coalition: 2 armed drones shot down at Baghdad airport



Parts of the wreckage of a drone lie on the ground at Baghdad airport, Iraq, Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

Associated Press

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Two armed drones were shot

down at the Baghdad airport on Monday, a U.S.-led coalition official said, an attack that coincides with

the anniversary of the 2020 U.S. killing of a top Iranian general.

There were no reports of damage or injuries from the incident, which was also confirmed by an Iraqi security official.

The official with the U.S.-led international coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq told The Associated Press that the C-RAM defense system at the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center engaged two fixed wing so-called "suicide drones." The C-RAM system protects American installations in Iraq. "This was a dangerous attack on a civilian airport," the coalition official said.

The Iraqi security official who confirmed the incident said the drones were headed toward a U.S. base at Baghdad airport housing U.S. advisors.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, although one of the wings of the drones had the words "Soleimani's revenge" painted on it, while another had words reading, "revenge operations for our leaders," according to the officials. Both spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The 2020 U.S. drone strike at Baghdad's airport killed Gen. Qassim Soleimani, who was the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, and

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

Pro-Iran Shiite factions in Iraq have vowed revenge for the killing and have conditioned the end of attacks against the U.S. presence in Iraq on the full exit of American troops from the country.

The U.S.-led coalition formally ended its combat mission supporting Iraqi forces in the ongoing fight against the Islamic State group last month. Some 2,500 troops will remain as the coalition shifts to an advisory mission to continue supporting Iraqi forces. □

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Fire reignites at South Africa's Parliament in Cape Town

By GERALD IMRAY

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa

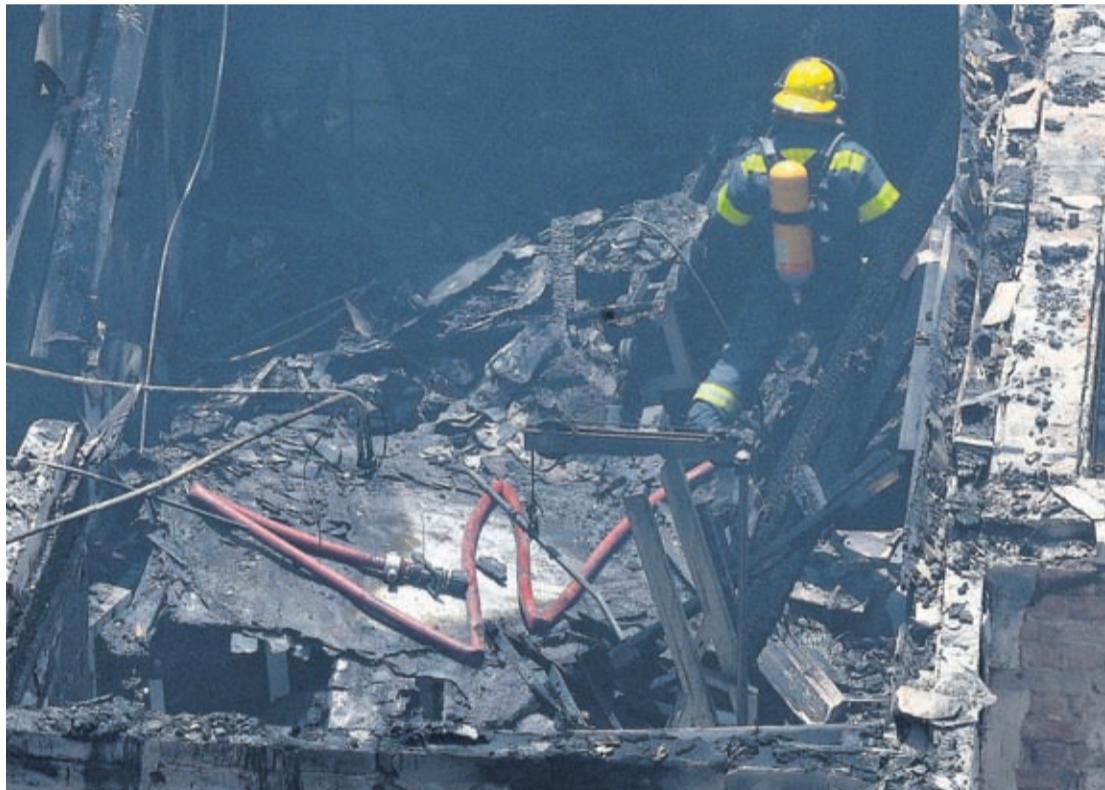
(AP) — The fire that has already destroyed South Africa's main Parliament chamber flared up again Monday about 36 hours after it started in the 130-year-old complex of historic buildings, authorities said. Firefighters have been sent back to the Parliament precinct in the center of Cape Town after flames reappeared on the roof of the main Parliament building in the late afternoon. More than 30 firefighters were battling the fire again, Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service spokesman Jermaine Carelse told the News 24 website.

Before the blaze reignited, authorities had said it had been contained and had begun to assess the damage. The fire had started around 6 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Still a mystery is the role of a man who has been arrested and is being questioned by police in connection with the fire. The man is due to appear in court on Tuesday and authorities weren't commenting further on his involvement or any possible motives, other than to say he would likely be charged with breaking and entering, theft and arson.

The man is also facing charges under South Africa's National Key Points Act, a security law that restricts access to government buildings and other places of national importance.

The man, who has not been named, was arrested Sun-



This photo supplied by the City of Cape Town shows a fireman fighting a fire at the Houses of Parliament, in Cape Town, South Africa, Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022.

Associated Press

day at the scene, authorities said. South African media reported he had to be rescued from the fire, while questions have been raised over if there was a deliberate attack on the seat of South Africa's democracy. Parliament was closed for the holidays and no injuries have been reported in the fire.

Extensive damage has been done to the stately white and red brick buildings in the Parliament precinct. The fire had already burned down the chamber in the National Assembly building where South African legislators meet to pass laws, Parliament said in a statement.

"We are indeed devastated," Parliament said. "We stand in front of a bro-

ken Parliament, a burnt down Parliament," lawmaker Natasha Mazzone said at the gates of the complex before the fire reignited. "Look at our roof, our beautiful roof, burnt, collapsed." "The National Assembly chamber is completely destroyed. I've seen it for myself. Everything is destroyed. This will take an operation second to none to rebuild," she said.

Two other buildings had

also been badly damaged in the inferno, Parliament said, including the original Parliament building that had been built in the 1880s and had weathered much of South Africa's tumultuous history, including British colonialism and the apartheid regime.

The South African Parliament moved to the New Assembly building, built in the style of the old building, in the 1980s and it had been

the seat of the national legislature for the momentous end of apartheid and the country's transition to democracy under the presidency of Nelson Mandela. Firefighters had been working on "hotspots" in the National Assembly building on Monday morning, Carelse said, but it was largely contained at that stage and the fire crews had been scaled back.

As the fire was originally brought under control, what was left was blackened, unrecognizable ruins inside some of the rooms.

"This is an incredibly sad day if you are a normal human being, to stand in front of this building and realize what we've lost," lawmaker Mazzone said.

Patricia de Lille, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, said that someone had turned off a valve which prevented a fire sprinkler system from functioning.

She said the investigation into the cause of the fire has been taken over by the Hawks, a South African police unit that deals with serious and high-profile crimes. An initial report on the fire from a special fire investigating team would be completed by Friday, she said. □

LOCAL



Over a decade in business, Aruba Living Today: Offering the so much needed human touch

NOORD — We are quickly approaching 2022. It's been a wild ride with Covid-19 and we all are aiming for a change of routine. We simply want to "live" life again. "It is time for living your dream," as the quote says at Aruba Living Today's office. "We are ten plus years in business, and I am proud to say that all our clients stuck with us. We are no part of a big company, we keep it small, personal, and real. Because you are not a number, no sales target either and certainly your name is not commission. Our responsibility is to make your dream come true," says owner Randolph Arrends.

Tempting times

Do you remember the feeling as a kid, when you went to the store with your mom and the baker gave you a sweet roll, the butcher a slice of ham and they all took time to talk to each other? That time when doing groceries on a Saturday meant fun, making friends, and creating connections. To be fully aware in the moment and enjoying the time together sounds like a controversy today. Everything is efficient, there's no-time-to-waste and while doing one task the mind is already thinking ahead to what is next on your to-do list. Did Covid-19 teach us anything? Weren't we telling each

other during the lockdown that we would pay more attention to each other? Wasn't the message that health and happiness is so much more valuable than hitting targets and implement to-do tasks? The pandemic prevents us from connecting physically. Tight hugs and shaking hands firmly are no longer a natural thing. We live in a world of face masks hides smiles, and hands are sanitized after each touch. This is not who we are. We are in search for connection.

From human to human

If you have decided to buy a house or rent one for vacation in Aruba and you are looking for that match, the question now is how to click with a person that offers a personal touch? One who pays genuine attention and has sincere interest in what you want? This different approach to real estate is what sets Aruba Living Today apart, and the reason Randolph calls himself a property mediator instead of a real estate broker. "The personal touch is essential to me. I am stepping aside of the image that real estate brokers are only in for the commission. This image does not fit me at all, I am in for my passion, and I can only do this from the heart."

One stop shopping point



Services offered by Aruba Living Today are House and Land Sales, Rentals, Investments, Property Management, Vacation Rental, Mortgages, Insurances, Maintenance, Assist in Arrangements for Notary and Utilities, Guiding Bureaucracy Process and Assisting in Import of Furniture. Randolph and his business partner Berend Prenger are a fantastic, experienced duo, each of them specialists in the field. Berend is also a certified appraiser within the Dutch Kingdom meaning he does your appraisal report that is accepted by all banks and he delivers within three days. "This definitely speeds up the process of buying," Prenger adds.

You are welcome to meet in person

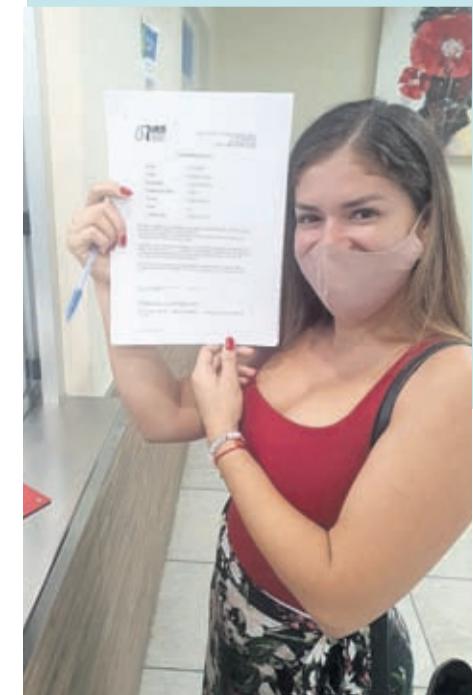
Aruba Living Today houses in an authentic Aruban house, welcoming you in a warm ambiance that emphasizes the philosophy of connecting. Candles, Buddha ornaments and a homey setting form the décor for you to sit and talk about your dream house or investment. "My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch."

Aruba Living Today caters for both local and foreign market divided into 40 % local buyers and 60 % foreign buyers. "Our customers come from Holland,

Belgium, Norway, Germany, UK, Russia, Latin America, United States and Canada. We are widely covered and thus provable good with different cultures, also we speak four languages." Besides that, Aruba Living Today is open to every budget, they have listings for all category buyers. As a member of the Aruban Real Estate Association, they are listed also on the website www.arubaliving.com within a group of 20 of the most advanced realtors on the island. Aruba Living Today is featured on House Hunters, social media, Aruba Living Today and of course in Aruba Today's newspaper. □

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Tankileendert 291, Aruba
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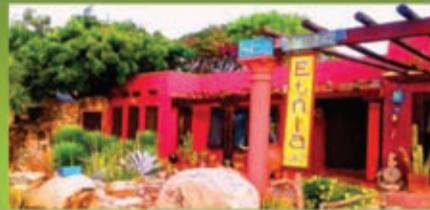
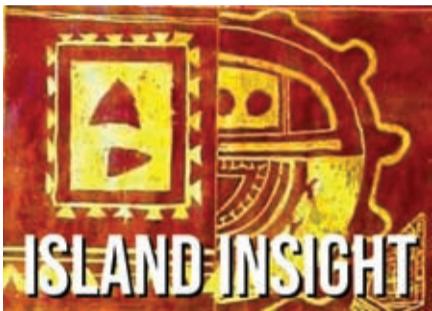
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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



New Year! Dande "Ay Nobe"!

Aruba's traditional New Year's celebration. We do not know exactly when the rhythm of Dande arose in Aruba, it is estimated that it was around the year of 1880 that it really start to be heard all over the island.

From the stories that have been passed down through generations we know that there is a supposition that the Dande was influenced by Arubans returning from Cuba and coinciding with the times when the Aruban people traveled to the island to work in the fields. The truth is that this particular rhythm does not exist anywhere else in the world.

The word Dande derives from "dandare" which means to go from one place to another. As for the expression "Ay nobe" it would be the result of the: Año Nuevo (New Year) of the Spanish language since there is no word that in our Papiamento language has a relationship with this expression.

The custom indicates that immediately after the clocks struck 12:00 pm and the New Year was welcomed, the musical group passed house to house singing to the rhythm of giving and with the song spreading good wishes to the inhabitants. The musical group consisted of a drummer, a Wiri player, and a singer. Over the years, instruments such as the "cuarta", guitar, the mandolin, accordion and even the violin were incorporated. Many times, others on the back of a donkeys, went to visit relatives first, infecting each home with joy and good wishes for the year that has just begun, then continued through the houses of friends and acquaintances.

As musicians were given great respect, the musical group would play at the limits of the houses they visited, just at the entrance, or in the front yard. Now if the owners of any particular house invited them to come in, they will continue playing inside each home. If the owner of the house did not want to receive them, they did not insist and went to the next house.

When the owner of the house gave his approval for

Episode CXXXVII - 137



the group to enter, the singer, as a sign of respect for the house and the family, would take off his hat. In this time there is a belief that the purpose of removing the hat was to receive money which is completely wrong.

The custom indicates that the singer begins to sing to the owner of the house, then to the lady and successively to the children even the youngest.

We must emphasize that the Dande rhythm, despite being written in six eight just like the tomb rhythm, has its original rhythm that is given by its own instru-

ments, as in these times the bass that gives it its original touch. The visits of the Dande group began with the New Year and lasted until January 6, the day in which the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the "Dia di Tres Rey" (Three Wise Men of the East). □

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etnianativa03@gmail.com or WhatsApp us 297 592 2702 for a private reservation.

Getting to know ARUBA



ORANJESTAD — Aruba, a mix of tropical flair, European charm and Latin flavor, no wonder we enjoy the highest repeat visitor rate of any Caribbean destination.

Our land...

Aruba is located in the heart of the southern Caribbean, 16 miles from the South American coastline. The island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across at its widest point, with a total area of 70 square miles.

Aruba's topography and vegetation are unusual for a Caribbean island. On the south and west coasts are miles of pristine white beaches that rank among

the most beautiful in the world, rimmed by calm blue seas with visibility in some areas to a depth of 100 feet. The northeast coast along the windward shore is rugged and wild. The interior is desert-like, with a variety of cacti and dramatic rock formations. The island's most famous trees are the watapana (divi) trees, all permanently sculpted into graceful southeast-bending shapes by the constant trade winds.

Our weather...

Except for a few scattered weather events annually and perhaps some limited showers on some days



(welcomed by our tropical plants!), the sun does indeed always shine here. The average temperature is 82 degrees F. The hottest months are from May through October and the coolest months are from December through March. The greatest likelihood of precipitation is from October through January.

Our people...

There are about 110,000 inhabitants on Aruba, repre-

senting more than 96 different nationalities – all living peacefully together. Hospitality remains a strongly engrained tradition. Official languages are Dutch as well as the native tongue of Papiamento. Most Arubans are fluent in English and Spanish as well. Papiamento is a lilting, melodic language, evolved over the centuries

Our visitors

Aruba attracts more than

800,000 international visitors annually and enjoys the highest return rate in the Caribbean. Perfect weather, hospitable people and world-renowned beaches are the most compelling factors for return visits. Also important are the island's mix of luxury high-rise and casual low-rise resorts, unique natural beauty and culture and abundant land and sea activities, safety and security and long-time friendships. □

Happy New Year from Aruba to



ORANJESTAD — We love that despite the crisis you decided to spend New Year with us, and we are therefor very thankful. We would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your new year celebration picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Happy New Year from Aruba to

Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive?

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use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page!

Thank you for supporting our free newspaper throughout the year. For 2022 we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

Here are some Happy new Year Greetings from our readers

Salvador Villaluz wrote:

"Happy New Year from Aruba to my family and friends in Canada. Bonne Année. I was at the New Year's Eve Gala at the Renaissance Convention Centre from 8 pm. There was top-shelf



open bar, all-you-can-eat food, thirteen different desserts, and live band. The three party girls in my table wanted to go for a photo shoot outside where we took over 100 pictures. At midnight, we went to the Renaissance Festival Plaza private area for the fireworks."

P.S. The low temperature in Toronto, Canada is -11°C while the lowest in Aruba is 24°C!

The **Nichols and Anschutz family** from Wisconsin celebrating New Year's Eve. The Alton's Christmas in Aruba

"My husband and I flew from Toronto to meet our family from New York and Germany in Aruba. We are staying at Barcelo and feel safe from covid with all safety measures being implemented. What is better than enjoying sun and sand during covid!" □

Kimberly Palmer: 5 steps to reach your money goals in 2022

By KIMBERLY PALMER of NerdWallet

In addition to the new year bringing confetti and a fresh calendar, it's a time to set big money goals for the next 12 months. That might mean finally paying off debt, buying a house or taking a long-delayed vacation.

With inflation and economic uncertainty clouding 2022, shoring up your finances this month can feel even more urgent.

"When you plan to start in the new year or some other important date for you, it can be easier to make that behavioral change, because we feel like we're making a fresh start," says Jeremy Burke, a senior economist at the University of Southern California's Center for Economic and Social Research.

Here are five steps money experts recommend to help you reach your money goals in 2022:

1. GET A CLEAR VIEW OF YOUR FINANCES

"The first step for everybody is to get organized," says Phuong Luong, a certified financial planner at Saltbox Financial in Massachusetts. That means making a list of your savings, debt and assets. A complete picture of your finances can help you decide what to focus on for the new year, she says, and provide a document that's easy to update annually.

Luong also suggests tracking your monthly cash flow with a spreadsheet or app to help you answer questions about what mortgage payment you could afford or which expenses you might be able to cut. "If you have those numbers organized, it's easier to have those conversations, with a professional or with yourself, about what you can actually afford," she says.

A complete self-assessment includes reflecting on your values, which may have shifted during the pandemic. "Figure out what is really important to you. Maybe you don't want to spend as much on clothes, or you'd like to help more charities. Maybe instead of a car, you'd like a nice desk



In this July 21, 2020, file photo, a homeowner tours their new home, in Washingtonville, N.Y.

Associated Press

and chair. It's easier to follow your budget when it's aligned with your values," says Shari Greco Reiches, a wealth manager in Illinois and author of the book "Maximize Your Return on Life."

2. TAKE BABY STEPS WITH YOUR EMERGENCY FUND

Emergency funds offer flexibility and comfort should you face unexpected expenses, but building one can be tricky. Behavioral economics suggests starting small, Burke says.

"Instead of setting a goal of saving \$400 a month, it could be better to save \$100 a week or an even smaller amount daily. There seems to be less friction to getting started when the time period is smaller so it's pennies per day instead of dollars per month," Burke suggests.

That means if you have a goal to save \$1,000 by the end of the year, increase

your chances of success by thinking of it as saving \$2.75 a day.

3. AUTOMATE LONGER-TERM SAVINGS

Another lesson from behavioral economics, Burke says, is to set up automatic transfers into your savings each month. "In terms of improving long-term outcomes, it's really helpful to have things automated as much as possible," he says. For example, if you contribute to a retirement account directly from your paycheck, you have to set it up only once, and your savings will continue to be deducted. You can also sign up to automatically increase the percentage you are saving each year or each time you get a salary increase, Burke adds.

You could set up similar automatic transfers into a college savings account or a high-yield savings account for other goals like saving

for a down payment.

4. PAY OFF THE DEBT WITH THE LOWEST BALANCES

For Americans hoping to pay off high-interest debt this year, David Gal, professor of marketing at the University of Illinois Chicago, says his research shows that consumers are more successful if they start by focusing on the smallest balances first, called the debt snowball method. "That gives the perception of success and progress, and increases the motivation to pay off the bigger accounts," he says.

Daphne Jordan, a CFP and wealth adviser in Texas, emphasizes the importance of staying positive. "Think about where you want to go in this new chapter of life," she suggests. "Don't see your financial past as a mistake. Everything is a learning experience."

Having an accountability partner to check in with

can also help keep you on track, says Rianka Dorsainvil, a CFP in Maryland and co-CEO of 2050 Wealth Partners, a financial planning firm. "Like with fitness, if we can count on one person checking in on us, we're more likely to be successful."

5. PLAN FOR SOME FUN, TOO

Budgeting for 2022 doesn't have to be a downer: You can also fit in some fun spending plans, which might include reconnecting with friends and family. "If you want to take a trip in August, think about the cost of the plane ticket, hotel and food," Dorsainvil says.

If it totals \$3,000, then aim to start saving \$375 a month through August.

That way, she says, "You're being realistic and setting measurable goals" — two approaches that increase your chances of success. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 42 High

1 It's true homes

5 Liner parts 43 Porgy's

10 Once love
more

12 Justice DOWN
Kagan 1 Renowned

13 Botched 2 Desert

15 Genesis plants
name 3 Rhythmic

16 Guidebook feature

17 High card

18 Ready for the body shop

20 Temple cabinets

21 Shoplifted Borgias

22 Exam 8 Door

23 Lawman Earp

25 Wizard

28 Is patient

31 At any time

32 Foot parts

34 Carnival city

35 Flavor-boosting additive, for short

36 Lyricist Gershwin

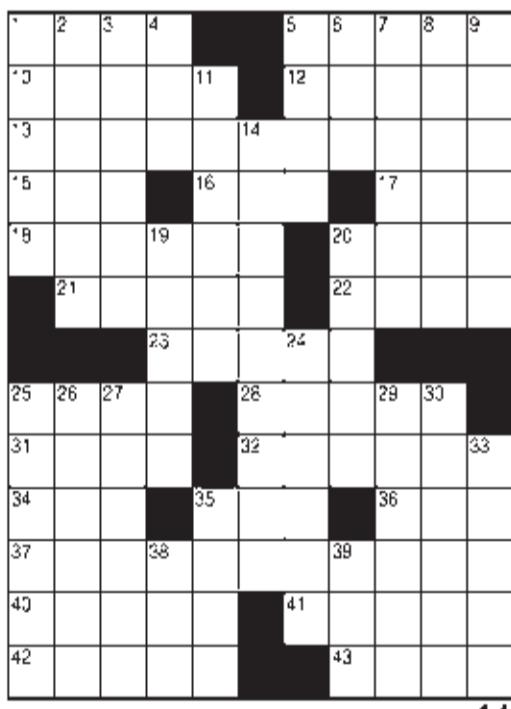
37 Pierced

40 On — (rampaging)

41 Rescued



Yesterday's answer



A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

M G D T D V O M X N L D X D I M Q O N E
Q X A N Z M V I U D M N V T T
I V M Y Z D . M G D D I M Q Z D N U D V I
Q O V E E D U M D J S C V A D S S T D .

— S T V Q O D A V O U V T

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR CIVILIZATION TO FLOW BACKWARDS WHILE THERE IS YOUTH IN THE WORLD. — HELEN KELLER

NASA's new space telescope 'hunky-dory' after problems fixed

By MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — NASA's huge, new space telescope is doing well more than a week after liftoff, following a pair of problems overcome by ground controllers, officials said Monday.

The tennis court-size sunshield on the James Webb Space Telescope is now fully open and in the process of being tightened. The operation should be complete by Wednesday.

The \$10 billion telescope is the largest and most powerful astronomical observatory ever launched rocketed away Christmas Day from French Guiana. Its sunshield and primary mirror had to be folded to fit into the European Ariane rocket.

The sunshield is vital for keeping Webb's infrared-sensing instruments at sub-zero temperatures, as they scan the universe for the



This photo provided by NASA, the James Webb Space Telescope is separated in space on Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

first stars and galaxies, and examine the atmospheres of alien worlds for possible signs of life.

Getting the sunshield extended last Friday "was really a huge achievement for us," said project manager Bill Ochs. All 107 release pins opened properly.

But there have been a few obstacles.

Flight controllers in Maryland had to reset Webb's solar panel to draw more power.

The observatory considered the successor to the

aging Hubble Space Telescope was never in any danger, with a constant power flow, said Amy Lo, a lead engineer for the telescope's prime contractor, Northrop Grumman.

They also repainted the telescope to limit sunlight on six overheating motors. The motors cooled enough to begin securing the sunshield, a three-day process that can be halted if the problem crops up again, officials said.

"Everything is hunky-dory and doing well now," Lo said. □

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Editor

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Assistant Director

Xiomara Arends

Editors

Liza Koolman (Management assistant)

Richard Brooks

Sales

Linda Reijnders

Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Pilar Flores

Columnists

Anthony Croes

Weststraat 22

T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

W: www.arubatoday.com

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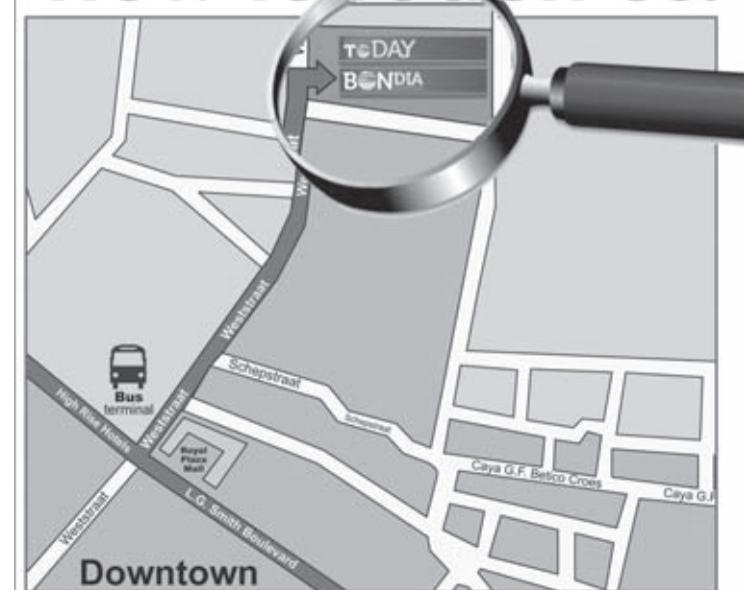
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Glass Animals ride the slow-burning 'Heat Waves' to Grammys

By MARK KENNEDY
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hospitals aren't usually incubators of great music, but in the case of English indie-pop band Glass Animals, one member's medical emergency led to a breakout album and a Grammy nomination.

Drummer Joe Seaward was struck by a truck in 2018 while riding his bike in Dublin, leaving him fighting for his life. Dave Bayley, the quartet's songwriter, singer and producer, spent long hours next to his friend in the hospital, the future uncertain under the harsh fluorescent lights.

"Hospitals are weird places, and I think because of that, they make you feel very nostalgic. You're looking for comfort in the past. So that was the kind of beginnings of the album," Bayley says. "I started writing down these memories and searching for more memories, and some of them were great. Some of them are really uncomfortable."

The album that emerged was the deeply personal "Dreamland," rooted in Bayley's past. There are playfully references to Scooby-Doo, Fruit Loops, Pepsi Blue and Mr. Miyagi, but also a song about domestic abuse ("Domestic Bliss") and a tune about an old



Members of the group Glass Animals, from left, Edmund Irwin-Singer, Joe Seaward, Dave Bayley and Drew MacFarlane appear at the Mercury Prize 2017 awards in London on Sept. 14, 2017.

Associated Press

friend who planned but never pulled off a school shooting ("Space Ghost Coast to Coast").

The standout single is "Heat Waves," a hypnotic, hazy tune that honors a departed friend whose birthday brings grief each passing June. It was a slow-moving hit, reaching the top 10 of Billboard's Hot 100 after 42 weeks on the chart, the longest climb to the top 10 in U.S. chart history. The song has earned over 1 billion streams on Spotify, landing it in the company of "Levitating" by Dua Lipa

and "Dynamite" by BTS. "Dreamland" was made before we ever knew about COVID-19, but it was born in period of personal turbulence for Dave and the band — in the wake of Joe's accident," says Amy Morgan, the band's manager.

"'Heat Waves,' for example, is a very personal love song about loss, but it connected because I think it captures a very universal sense of loss — which is at the forefront of all of our hearts at the moment, sadly." Glass Animals also snagged

a Grammy Award nomination for best new artist, even if that's a little curious for a band whose debut album came out in 2014. Later this month, they'll compete against the likes of Olivia Rodrigo, Saweetie, Finneas, Japanese Breakfast, The Kid Laroi and Arlo Parks. The band has also bagged two Brit Award nominations. Bayley believes some of the success of the album is due to the pandemic. Finding the future bleak, many listeners looked for comfort in the past — like he had done back in the hospital.

"They were in a similar position to the position that I was in when I wrote a lot of this record," he says. "Everyone was stuck inside. They were listening to the music they grew up with. They were eating the food that they grew up with it. They were seeking comfort in those situations and reliving these memories because they can't be out creating new ones as well."

The confessional roots of "Dreamland" were actually sown on the band's last album, "How to Be a Human Being," which saw Bayley write each song from the perspective of someone else. The last one, "Agnes," was about a friend of the band who died by suicide. It was Bayley's most personal song and marked a change in his songwriting. He didn't want to put it on the album. He played it for the rest of the band, who quickly insisted it be on the album. Fans later wrote letters saying how much the song meant to them and that gave Bayley courage to turn more inward.

"That response gave me a lot of confidence to write more personal things," he says. "The songs that have meant the most to me by my favorite writers is when they speak about something personal and it makes you feel less alone." □

New hi-tech photo brings Rembrandt's 'Night Watch' up close



A microscopic image enlarging a 4x6 millimeter part of the painting on Rembrandt's Night Watch, which will be restored next year in the public eye, is seen on a screen next to the painting at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2018.

Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — Rem-

brandt van Rijn's iconic

and huge painting "The Night Watch" is now also a supersized museum photo delivered right to your laptop in unsurpassed detail. The Amsterdam Rijksmuseum on Monday put on its digital portal what it called "the most detailed photograph of any artwork" ready for assessment by scientists and art lovers alike.

It is expected to draw widespread interest especially since the museum is closed because of coronavirus measures.

The 717-gigapixel photo allows viewers to zoom in on Captain Frans Banninck Cocq and see how the 17th-century master put

the tiniest of white dots in his eyes to give life to the painting's main character. It also shows the minute cracks in his pupils, brought on by the passage of time. The real canvas measures 379.5 x 453.5 centimeters (149.4 x 178.5 inches) canvas and each pixel represents 5 micrometers or 0.005 square millimeters.

Apart from simply showing the dazzling detail, it will also help researchers restore the work and assess its aging process over time. The Night Watch will be removed from its wooden stretcher in two weeks and placed on a new one to remove rippling that was caused when the

world famous painting was housed in a temporary gallery while the Rijksmuseum underwent major renovations from 2003-2013.

The oil-on-canvas painting depicts a group of Amsterdam civil militia and shows off Rembrandt's renowned use of light and composition to create a dynamic scene filled with characters.

The painting has undergone many restorations over its existence. It was placed on its present wooden stretcher in 1975. Once the painting has been re-stretched, the museum will decide whether further restoration work is needed. □

Cavaliers land Rondo from Lakers to offset loss of Rubio

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Once Ricky Rubio was lost for the season, the Cleveland Cavaliers knew it would take someone special to take his spot.

They needed a playmaking guard with experience, intelligence and competitive toughness.

Rajon Rondo checked every box.

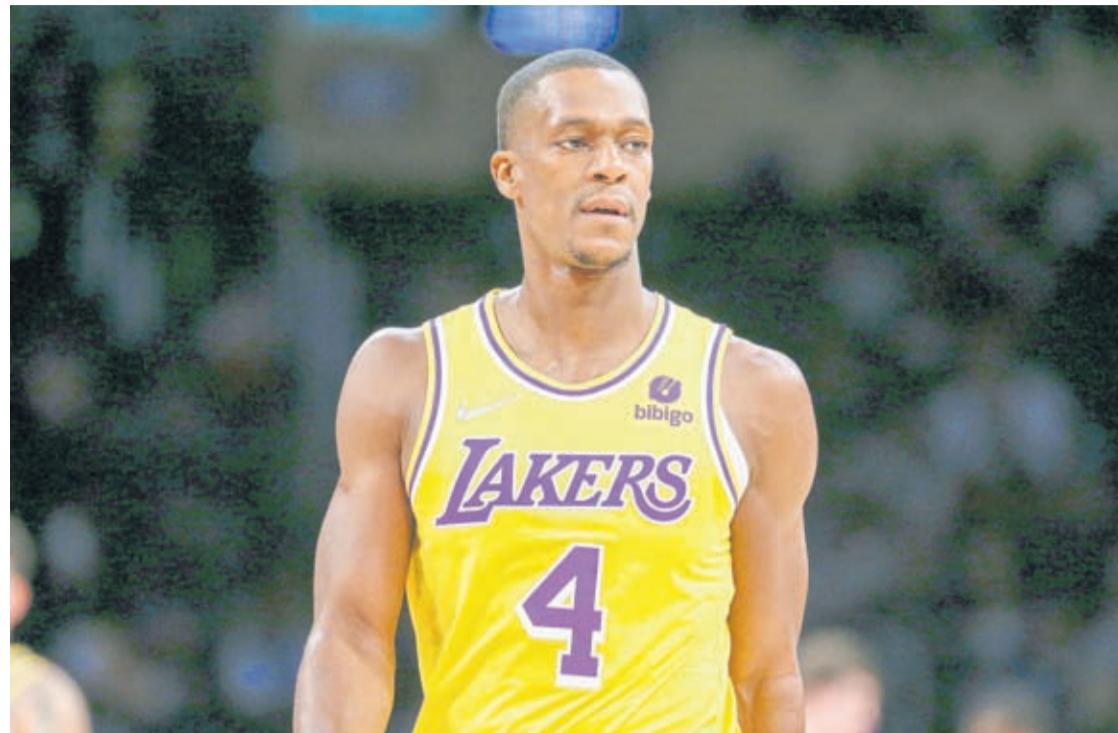
Cleveland completed its acquisition of the 35-year-old Rondo on Monday, finalizing its trade with the Los Angeles Lakers in what eventually became a three-team deal involving the New York Knicks.

In the swap, the Knicks receive guard Denzel Valentine from the Cavaliers along with the draft rights to international prospects Wang Zhelin and Brad Newley and cash from the Lakers. Los Angeles receives the draft rights to Louis Labeyrie from New York.

A four-time All-Star and twice an NBA champion, Rondo, who was barely playing with the Lakers, is joining an improved Cleveland team that has risen from doormat to playoff contender.

The Cavs are 21-15 and fifth in the Eastern Conference after going 22-50 last season.

"He's excited about it," Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff said of Rondo, who was averaging only 9.3 minutes per game in LA. "Our guys have provided



Los Angeles Lakers guard Rajon Rondo (4) stands during the first half of a preseason NBA basketball game against the Golden State Warriors in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

excitement around the league and people see the growth in our guys and the style of play and he's looking forward to it.

"He's one of the most competitive guys that I've seen since I've been around and he wants to help this team and he wants to go compete, so he's not satisfied with not playing. He's a good teammate, obviously. He wants come here. He wants to get on the floor and he wants to contribute and help our team become a better team."

Rondo was recently sidelined after a positive COVID-19 test but has cleared NBA health and safety protocols. It's not yet known when he'll join the Cavaliers, who are still working

through some logistics with him.

Cleveland hosts Memphis on Tuesday before beginning a six-game, nine-day trip in Portland on Thursday. Losing the invaluable Rubio to a torn anterior cruciate ligament is a blow for the Cavs. The 31-year-old's impact in less than a half-season with Cleveland was profound whether as a mentor to young starting point guard Darius Garland or his solid leadership on and off the floor.

Rondo has many of those same attributes — and a similar game — to Rubio's, and Bickerstaff believes his addition will offset the loss from becoming overwhelming.

"He can make everyone on

the floor around him better," Bickerstaff said. "And that's what we're excited about, his ability to play with all of our guys — from Darius to our big guys — he can make all of their jobs easier and that's what we need."

Rondo, who won titles with the Celtics in 2008 and Lakers in 2020, also has a fierce attitude that fits in nicely. A major part of the Cavaliers' success this season has been their intensity. They've simply played harder, outworking teams to get an edge.

"That's kind of who we've been trying to be the whole year," forward Lauri Markkanen said. "Whenever you add a guy who is as competitive as he is, it's going to

be a good thing for us. Obviously, he can do a lot of stuff other than compete, so it's going to be good to add such a competitive, smart player."

Rondo has averaged 9.8 points, 8.0 assists and 4.6 rebounds in 16-plus seasons with eight teams. He has led the league in assists three times, been an All-Defensive Team selection four times and started 105 playoff games.

"He's one of those guys that you have a ton of respect for, and what you respect most is his mind," Bickerstaff said. "When you're watching a guy orchestrate a game as a fan of basketball, that's what you love to see."

"You love to see a guy be able to dictate and control the game and manipulate a game at all facets. He does that on both ends of the floor. You talk about his edge and his competition level, those are the guys you appreciate and respect the most."

NOTES: F Isaac Okoro could miss three weeks with a sprained left elbow suffered in Sunday's win over Indiana. Okoro, who was out earlier this season with a hamstring injury and recently in the league health and safety protocols, got hurt when he ran into a screen set by Pacers big man Domantas Sabonis in the first half. One of Cleveland's best defenders, Okoro is averaging 9.0 points and 3.6 rebounds in 27 games. □

Shiffrin returns to World Cup after recovering from virus

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin is set to return to the women's World Cup at a slalom on Tuesday, eight days after she announced she tested positive for COVID-19 and was forced out of two technical races in Austria last week. Shiffrin had a negative test on Monday afternoon before the American's name appeared on the official start list for the race released by the International Ski Federation.

"See you tomorrow, Za-

greb," Shiffrin wrote on Instagram.

Shiffrin, who has won the event four times since 2013, will wear bib No. 7. The first run starts at 12:30 p.m. local time (1130 GMT); the second run at 4:05 p.m. (1505 GMT), and this course will be set by Shiffrin's coach, Mike Day.

However, Shiffrin's American teammate, Nina O'Brien, is among a group of racers missing Tuesday's race as the coronavirus is increasingly affecting the

women's circuit, less than five weeks before the Beijing Olympics.

The group sidelined for Tuesday's race also includes at least three Swiss skiers -- Camille Rast, Aline Danioth and Mélanie Meillard -- as well as two Austrians, a Norwegian, and an Italian.

One of the Austrians, Franziska Gritsch, said in November it was her "personal decision" not to get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

She was not allowed to travel to the Nov. 27-28 tech races in Killington, Vermont, for that reason.

Shiffrin missed a giant slalom and a slalom in Lienz last week but remained in the lead of the overall World Cup standings, 93 points ahead of Sofia Goggia. The Italian speed specialist, who has not competed in slalom for five years, is absent in Croatia. Petra Vlhova, who is Shiffrin's main rival in slalom, won the race in Austria last

week and increased her lead over the American in the discipline standings to 120 points after four of nine races.

Vlhova, who will open the slalom on Tuesday, has won the floodlit race in Zagreb for the past two years. No spectators will be allowed at the race on the outskirts of the Croatian capital, which usually is among the best-visited races on the women's calendar. □



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